

PART 44.

Third
Series

VOL
8

AUGUST,
1892.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 188—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 1892. PRICE TWOPENCE.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER IX. GOOD-BYE.

IN all Geoffrey Thorne's wanderings no place had ever seemed to him so much like home as that white, crumbling, tower-like house on the Castle ramparts of Herzheim, with the wide, dignified, now deserted staircase, and the high room beautified by really artistic carvings and mouldings of an older time. He had loved the old room even before Poppy came into it. Now he began to wonder if it would be possible to keep it always, and visit it now and then. The proposal would astonish his old landlady; but she liked him, and had long ago confided to him all her troubles and anxieties. She considered Geoffrey a gentleman. He paid her well and regularly; he talked to her easily in her own language; and she thought his drawings very beautiful. She said he could make a fine fortune, if he chose, by painting little pictures to be sold in the bazaars. He could do them better than the natives, in her opinion. She was a little afraid to advise too strongly for fear of playing traitor to her country people; but there seemed no harm in giving her English friend a few hints. Geoffrey took them very well. He understood the compliment that was meant, smiled gently, and thanked old Dorothée for the idea. She had a high opinion of herself as an art critic, for her large room had been several times let as a studio. He would not for the world have disturbed that opinion.

Mère Dorothée was not quite so well

pleased when English people began to visit her tenant's studio. He looked none the happier for these visits, she thought. She could have told them how he worked by fits and starts; how he paced up and down the room; how peace and enjoyment seemed to have departed from him. She also saw him, from her little barred window downstairs, mooning and moping up and down in the churchyard, or standing for whole quarters of an hour in the little white turret with its scarlet drapery of leaves. This happened in the middle of the day—when Mr. Thorne, as a rule, was steadily at work—immediately after the visit of an English lady and gentleman.

They walked past Dorothée on the way up to the churchyard. She had been out on the lake in her boat with some people from the "Grand Hotel," and she was now crawling up home to her small breakfast, and to see that her tenant wanted nothing, leaving the boat in the charge of two grandsons, under the shade of some yellow trees. People did not care to go out so much in the very middle of the day.

These two English people were Captain Nugent and his sister-in-law. Geoffrey saw them approach with a feeling of horror. But he found it impossible to be very stiff or unfriendly, for there was no excuse, except his momentary fancy of the day before, for disliking Arthur Nugent. With his easy, unconscious, simple boyishness of manner, he generally took people by storm; and however any rival of his might rage inwardly, or when he was not there, he had only to appear to make that rival conscious of a hidden shame.

"Couldn't be a nicer fellow; no harm in him; as open and straightforward as daylight," was the absolutely irresistible

conclusion ; and it was strengthened by Arthur's quietness—almost serenity. Then his pleasant smiling eyes seemed to make some sort of apology for the languor of ill-health still hanging about him, and the white, frail look which set up some kind of barrier between him and other men.

And Alice Nugent was by no means without good nature and good manners. As she had come with Arthur to see this poor tiresome man's pictures, she was quite prepared to do her duty.

"One always has to tell lies in a studio," she observed, as they walked up.

As a fact, however, she did not find it necessary to be very untruthful. She really saw promise in some of the sketches, not being so critical as her husband ; and of these she expressed an amount of admiration which ought to have satisfied any artist. Also, Geoffrey Thorne himself, in his painting blouse, with his grave face, and a touch of sadness and humility in his work which did not affect his very evident strength and manliness of nature, seemed to her interesting and picturesque. He was much more in place here than among them all last night in the salon. While examining the drawings she spared a keen glance now and then for the artist as he talked to Arthur, and she felt a little sorry for him. Having, among her excellently worldly qualities, a great dislike to unnecessary spending of money, she was pleased by his answer to the question—which yet seemed to give him no offence—whether he had any wish to sell his pictures.

"No; not now; not here," he answered. "I don't know what I may do later, in London. My plans are quite uncertain."

"That is nice," thought Alice. "We shall not be bound to buy things we don't want, or thought stingy if we don't buy them."

She did not suspect the strange, mistaken fancies, the ambitions for that coming autumn, which were making the poor fellow madly careful of his dignity. In fact, as she stood there and listened to his talk with her brother-in-law, it struck her that Mrs. Nugent's plan meant quite unnecessary cruelty. His admiration for Poppy Latimer was only too evident, of course. That was not to be denied; but after all, what was it? Just an artist's romantic devotion to beauty. If Otto and Arthur admired the girl so much, was it any wonder if a painter admired her still more?

"Nonsense! Exaggerated stuff!" was

Mrs. Otto Nugent's conviction. "Mamma deserves to fail in her plans, she drives at them so hard. However, as we are going, this poor man ought to know. I must tell him in a minute or two, if Arthur does not."

Arthur did not. He loitered agreeably round, and they might have gone away without hinting that this was their first and last visit, if Alice had not suddenly pounced on a sketch which made things easy.

"The Jungfrau at sunset, from Saint Carolus. That's lovely, Mr. Thorne—like a burning mountain. I wonder if we shall see a sunset like that. Do you know that we are all going off to-morrow to Saint Carolus?"

"For the night? Are you really?" said Geoffrey, with quite a new brightness in his tone. "You will find it a very pretty place. Quiet, you know; quite country. But if you like romantic walks——"

"I don't," she replied. "I would rather stay here, though this is not my ideal. But we have all found out in a great hurry that Herzeim doesn't agree with us. Captain Nugent's mother is not happy about him, nor about herself; and my husband does not care for a town, though he says very little. So I am carried away by the wishes of the majority."

"Not coming back, then? I thought you only meant an excursion."

"Never in my life," said Alice afterwards to Otto, "did I feel so like a cat playing with a mouse; the poor man's voice and face were absolutely joyful. It was too hard to have to tell him that we were not going alone."

She was astonished at her own kind feelings.

"You will be lonely," she said, and her bright eyes looked him straight in the face.

He looked at her, entirely puzzled for the moment; and now she flushed a little with excitement and interest, for never was a man's story more plainly to be read than in that transition from joy through alarm to misery which his expressive features showed almost immediately.

"You cannot mean that," he seemed to say. "Yet you must mean something, when you talk to me of loneliness; and there is no other. Yes; I see it all."

He said nothing. Arthur, a few yards off, was stooping over the Saint Carolus sketch. Alice lowered her eyes, for she hardly dared still to look at him.

"Miss Latimer and her niece are going

with us," she said in a low, matter-of-fact voice, quite without its former liveliness. "I believe Miss Latimer, too, is rather glad to get away; she has not felt very well here. They all think the air of Saint Carolus will be so much better. And you know Mrs. Nugent's objection in coming here was to be with Miss Latimer."

"Yes, so I heard," Geoffrey answered. "And—I beg your pardon—to-morrow, did you say?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

His paleness struck her painfully, and she looked back once or twice, as she walked away with Arthur, at the old white walls where they had left him among his pictures. It seemed as if Arthur had noticed nothing, and this was not wonderful, for his intuitions were seldom quick. But as they went down the stony lane he turned to her and said :

"Alice, don't be angry, but didn't you explain a good deal to that fellow? I mean, you know, a good deal more than was necessary. We needn't consult him, surely, as to whether we go or stay. I didn't quite see why you should explain about Miss Latimer."

"Oh, I thought he was rather a friend of theirs," said Alice lightly. "And he will be lonely, poor man. He seems to have nobody else here."

"Well, I don't know. It's a funny sort of friendship—more a kind of patronage—and one feels as if Miss Latimer could so very well explain for herself, if she wished it."

"Of course, I know, but artists are sensitive, and I thought—"

"It doesn't matter, of course. Only I always find one has to be just a little careful, don't you know, with people like that."

"I don't think I have done much harm," she answered a little scornfully.

"None—none whatever. I was only thinking what Miss Latimer would have liked. We, of course, have nothing on earth to do with the man."

Alice did not defend herself further, though she felt a little angry. It was not the first time that Arthur had appeared to her somewhat in the light of a fool.

Geoffrey Thorne's painting did not advance much that afternoon. At first he was plunged in the lowest depth of depression by the news that Mrs. Otto Nugent had not unkindly told him. It seemed to him strange and unkind that his friends should not have taken the

trouble to tell him themselves of this intended move; and yet he was much more angry with himself for expecting such consideration. He very nearly destroyed the sketch he had made with so much pains for Porphyria. What was the use of laying his work at her feet? She cared no more for that than she did for him. He thought he had better not see her again, and resolved to keep away from the hotel altogether that day. If she gave him so much thought as to wish to say good-bye, she could easily send him a message.

He walked up and down his room for a long time, much to the disapproval of Mère Dorothée downstairs. Presently, leaving the sketch undestroyed—for after all it was good, and pleased him better than anything he had yet done, and its destruction seemed, except in the first flush of injured feelings, an unnecessary height of heroism—he ran downstairs and set himself to pacing round and round the stern, monotonous square of the churchyard. It had often been a scene of inspiration for him, and all those quaint epitaphs, reminding him of lives like his own, now quietly ended and cold, seemed just the touch of poetry wanted to soften hard broad lines, either in plans of work or dreams of living.

The worn pavement of the still place echoed under his impatient footsteps. Lake quivering with rainbow light, mountains grey and dazzling silver, foreground of clear-cut shadows and varied colour of trees and towers and leaf embroidery, all becoming more intense and brilliant as the sun of the September day crept round to the west; they had often helped him before, and even now they did not quite fail him. At least, he went quietly after a time into the haunted turret at the corner, and sat down on the stone ledge there and waited, thinking strongly and telling himself once more the sternest truths, yet half expecting every moment that she would appear, coming out of the shadow round the corner of the house wall, and vowing inwardly that if she did not, she would never be troubled with the sight of him again.

He knew his own weakness so little as to be absolutely surprised that evening to find himself following other people into the "Blumenhof" dining-room, and taking his usual place near the door. Neither the Nugent party nor the two Miss Latimers had yet come in; but in a few minutes he

felt, rather than saw, the people who were passing rather quickly behind his chair. Miss Fanny Latimer paused a moment to say in a low and friendly tone: "We shall see you after dinner, Mr. Thorne."

He looked round and rose to his feet, meeting not her eyes, but Poppy's, for she was close behind her aunt. She gave him the slightest bend of her head, with a little sweet smile. Geoffrey trembled from head to foot as she passed on. He did not look after her; she was followed by Otto and Arthur Nugent. Otto's quick eyes, at least, had seen his face, and Otto had smiled to himself, thinking that the move to Saint Carolus was a good one. No one but his mother, perhaps, would have seen the necessity so clearly, and acted on it with such instantaneous energy. His mother was a very clever woman.

After dinner they all lingered a little on the terrace; but the moonlight was not quite so beautiful, there was a slight chill in the air, and again this evening mists were rising from the lake, and hovering in the lower part of Herzheim. Very soon Mrs. Nugent, followed by Miss Latimer, escaped into the salon, murmuring some little warning to Arthur as she went. He took no notice of this, however, but presently asked Poppy whether she was cold, and whether he might fetch her some kind of wrap. She thanked him very gently, and said no. Then, having been rather silent for a few minutes, she turned to Geoffrey, with whom Otto and his wife had been trying to make conversation, and said, rather oddly, they all thought: "Are you going home soon—to Bryans, I mean? I want to give you some messages."

"May I have them now? I shall not see you again, I suppose."

"Are you coming into the salon?"

"No."

The word was spoken with the courage of despair, for this seemed to be his last chance. He had things to say—at least he fancied so—and he could not, would not, spend another evening like the last, though at the time, not knowing what was so soon to follow, it had been more than bearable.

Poppy thought his manner strange. She was conscious that some odd feeling—perhaps it was responsibility—connected with him kept her from being quite happy, quite single-hearted, with her new friends, quite glad to be going away from Herzheim. Was it the painter's dark reproachful eyes that haunted her; or

was it Saint Margaret in the porch, with suggestions of some unknown height of self-forgetfulness; or was it only the fascination of the old mediæval town, its rushing waters and grand distant guard of mountains? If it were Geoffrey Thorne, why should his eyes be reproachful? She had not neglected him.

Though she hardly knew what she wanted to say to him, or what her interest in him was, one thing seemed clear; they must talk together for a few minutes alone before she left Herzheim. Here she understood that "No" rightly.

Then, somehow, the other people had disappeared, as if they instinctively knew what must happen to her; and she was left alone with Geoffrey in the dim half-light, the shadow of the plane-trees, her tall, slight, straight figure dressed in some pale colour, her fair head bent in rather puzzled thought, looking really like the slender wild flower to which Alice Nugent had compared her.

"You are going away, Miss Latimer," Geoffrey repeated.

He seemed to her a little tiresome, for they had just been talking about the move, all together, and he had been inclined to praise Saint Carolus. It did not seem necessary to go back, to express regrets, almost to make apologies for what was so very natural. Poppy was never fond of unnecessary tragedies, and morbid fancies were not likely to be encouraged by her, though no one was more ready to acknowledge the claims of friendship to the full.

"Yes," she said, with a curious gravity, her eyes wandering away into the shadowy orchard. "It is a little sooner than we expected, but I did not think we should stay here long."

A mere shade in expression would have made both words and manner cold. Probably she felt this herself, and her kind heart rebelled, for in a moment her voice softened, and the old friendliness came back to her eyes.

"My aunt and I meant to have come to your studio this afternoon," she said, "but we were prevented. I wanted to tell you of our new plans; and then, do you know, if I may say it, I should so much like to possess one or two of your drawings. You won't mind parting with them? That is your wish, isn't it? I hardly know which, without seeing them again; but Mrs. Otto Nugent has been telling me of such a pretty sketch of the Jungfrau from Saint

Carolus, where we are going. I thought perhaps I might have that—only, may I see Saint Carolus itself before deciding?"

He listened patiently. Nothing that sweet voice said could hurt much; but if he would not sell his drawings to other people, most certainly he would not to her. He hesitated a moment; her questions must be answered as gently as they were asked. That miserable thing, civilisation, laid its cold touch on his longing desire to kiss her hand or her dress; to tell her that as the artist was hers, his work was hers, so that there could not, in the nature of things, be any question of buying and selling.

"I told Captain Nugent this afternoon," he said, "that I did not mean to sell any of my pictures now. Later, perhaps—I don't know. But of course—if you care for any of them they are yours. You could not, I think, give me greater happiness. You will let me know some day if you will have the Jungfrau sketch. And I must confess that I have been working at one, specially for you—Herzheim from the other side of the lake. I think it is not so bad as some. Will you let me—I will send it to you at Bryans."

"I should like it very much indeed, if you have done it on purpose for me. Thank you so much. It will be a recollection of these pleasant days. But only that one, please. That one on condition that you don't give away any more. You will never get on at all if you are so generous with your work. And tell me, are you likely to be here much longer?"

"I think not—I don't know. I may pay them a visit at home this autumn. Will you be going back—before very long?"

"Some time in October, I suppose."

"Did you say you had any messages?"

"No—no. But we should like you to make friends with our dear Rector. I don't think you know him; and I rather wish you would renew your acquaintance with the Farrants, my friends in the village. Mr. Farrant would like to see you. You would interest him, I'm sure. And Maggie—well, you might paint her portrait. Yes; paint it for me."

They were strolling in the shadow of the plane-trees down towards the orchard where Geoffrey had had his best and longest talk with her two evenings before. He could not see the flush on her cheek, the laugh in her eye, the look as if she had said something a shade too daring. But

he did wonder at a certain touch of pleasure and eagerness in the tone of her voice.

"You set me something to do for you," he said, "like a princess in a fairy tale. The task isn't an easy one. I never paint portraits, you know."

"But why not try? Why not begin? It must be the most interesting kind of painting. And Maggie Farrant will astonish you. She will inspire you. She would inspire any artist."

"Still, you have set me a hard task, you know. And, don't you remember, people in fairy tales had something to look forward to."

The words nearly choked him. They were the boldest he had yet said to her; and yet he tried to make his tone a little playful, as hers now was, and succeeded so well that any depth of passionate feeling was as unperceived as it would have been unwelcome.

"We will think about that when I come home," she said. "In the meanwhile, you must be disinterested."

They walked a few yards further; then she turned back with a slight shiver, and said the evenings were like autumn now.

They talked a little, strolling back along the terrace, of the next day's journey to Saint Carolus. Geoffrey could bear to hear and to talk of it now, for it seemed to him as if the sweetness of the first evening had come back; as if he had been a fool to be jealous and unhappy, to think her for a moment cold or unkind. Not that he was actually hopeful. He could not misunderstand her so far; and the parting, the empty weeks to come, lay upon him with a weight of sadness. But with this sadness there was something sweet, perhaps only a lover's own deep rejoicing in the perfection of what he loves.

The terrace was deserted, and the moonlight was pale and ghostly; very different from the glorious golden flood, which almost seemed to have warmth like sunshine, of two evenings ago. Streams of light from the hotel windows fell across the gravel, on the grey stems of the plane-trees, and the chairs and tables, and the stone balustrades of the garden. Near the salon window Geoffrey lingered a little.

"May I say good-bye here?"

"Is it really good-bye?" she asked, as her fingers touched his. "We shall see you to-morrow, shan't we? The boat does not go till half-past twelve. Can't you come down and see us off?"

"No." He hesitated ; but in a moment became more positive. "I want a long day's sketching to-morrow—an expedition. No ; I shall not see you again."

"You will come in now and say good-bye to my aunt—and the others?"

"No—excuse me. Please ask Miss Latimer to forgive me. Don't think me a savage, but I don't want to come in."

She stood still a moment, and one cannot tell what thoughts crossed her mind. In any case, she was not angry—perhaps no woman can be angry at being worshipped, however impossible and unsuitable the worshipper may be.

"Good-bye, then," she said very low. "'Auf wiedersehen.' Give my love to them at Bryana."

He bowed his head and sprang down the steps into the garden. Just then Arthur Nugent, after looking out for the twentieth time, stepped impatiently from the salon window to welcome her. As she walked into the room he wondered, almost jealously, at the smile on her lips. It seemed to him so exquisite that he shared, for the first time, in his brother's wish to kick that painter fellow.

IN THE MOUNTAINS OF MAJORCA.

MAJORCA of the Balearics is not at all a bad place for the Englishman at large in the Mediterranean. It has, too, the advantage of being by no means overrun with other Britons. Still, it is confessedly slow—and especially during Lent. Now and then a citizen dies and has to be buried—for which the cold-blooded tourist is grateful, inasmuch as it provides him with a mild spectacle as he sits smoking a cigar in the Rambla under the shade of the plane-trees. Ordinarily, there is not much to do except eat, drink, and lounge about in the windmill-studded precincts of the town. Of sights there are few, save the cathedral, the old exchange, the Castle of Belloer, beautifully situated a couple of miles away, and the industrious Majorcans themselves, at work in their little shops in the narrow streets of the town.

Thus we soon wearied of the capital, and the more because it was so mortally relaxing, even in April. With our British instincts upon us, we determined therefore to get off into the mountains. Majorca, it must be understood, is just about equally divided into flat land and hilly land. The interior of the island is nearly as level

as a dish, and, of course, dreadfully hot, except on days of extraordinary cold. But all the west of the island is mountainous. The highest points are about four thousand feet above the sea, which is a very fair altitude for so small an island.

So, one wasting day in mid-April, we set off afoot for Valldemosa, each with a mere cartridge-case upon our shoulders, containing night-gear, tooth-brush, and comb, and nothing more. Our Palma landlord used all possible argument to induce us to hire a carriage, at least for the beginning of the tour. But we were obstinate. We meant to take the rough with the smooth, or, rather, the intensely hot with the enjoyably temperate, and get a fair average amount of pleasure out of the entire trip.

It was hot in the plain, and no mistake, when we had left the huge fortifications of the capital behind us, and had the purple mountains in front for our goal. By the way, Palma's walls are worth the artist's notice. They are really a very fine piece of mediæval work, and though crumbling, may yet last another couple of centuries. We were in the whitest of white high-roads, with fertile gardens on both sides of us, with fig-trees, almond-trees, and the other usual vegetation of these latitudes. From the orange-trees the perfume of sweet blossoms came to us very agreeably. Now and again we passed a portly "finca," or country villa, painted blue or crimson, and with a palm-tree or two in its vicinity, as well as fields of maize and olive-woods near. The dust began to lift, denoting a breeze from the hills. Vehicular traffic was rare, for a mercy. But at intervals a lumbering car, with a wine-barrel on it, creaked towards us, and its oxen or mules half smothered us for a moment. Our Palma landlord was distinctly right in trying to dissuade us from pedestrianism in the Majorca plain. We lost pounds of flesh, I should think, during the couple of hours ere we got into the first glen of the mountains, with something between us and the sun.

Here, however, it was exquisite. That is really the chief feature of Majorca : the abrupt change from mountains to plains. The former spring bolt upright from the latter, with little or none of the preliminary ascents common in other lands. Cultivation of a close kind suddenly ceased. The grey rocks rose almost perpendicularly for a thousand feet or so upon either

hand, with contorted fig-trees and olives sticking out of the clefts wherever they could get root-hold. A mean little brook trickled from the pass towards the plain, with trees by its banks and many of the flowers of spring.

Gradually the glen turned towards the north-west, giving us glimpses of towering and wooded mountain-tops beyond, and then it slowly widened. At length the superb valley of Valldemosa was before us, with its crags massed with foliage, and in the distance a church spire. This is a most beautiful little spot. You are in a hole like the bottom of a teacup, and all round are fantastic peaks, with woods of ilex, fir, and olive over the mountain spurs. Here and there in the bed of the valley are vineyards and fruit gardens, and the latter were in most bountiful blossom, the perfume of which was enchanting. As luck would have it, a nightingale was singing as we entered the heart of this wonderful little recess. We would at that moment have been content, like the monks of old, to live out our days in this scene of beauty.

But it was dreadfully relaxing. Not a breath of air stirred. Fortunately the sun had gone behind one of the mountain-peaks, and left us merely the blue canopy overhead. Yet even as it was we had some ado to drag our legs in the direction of the church spire. The village of Valldemosa is a poor place. It has no inn. But there is something to see in the remains of the old Carthusian monastery which was suppressed in 1835, and which is now cut up so as to form a number of country apartments for rich Palma people. Nothing can be imagined more voluptuously attractive than the life led in the season by these happy tenants. The rooms are bowered with flowers, and look out upon gardens with the wooded mountains beyond. Of harmful winds there can be none here. We were immensely taken with one or two of the suites through which we were conducted. Moreover, as they were furnished for immediate habitation, it seemed quite cruel that the housekeeper should shake her head in response to our wish that we might be bedded here for the night. The church adjacent to these transformed "cells" is not interesting. It has some bright green and white tile-work, and from the tower one has an admirable view of the old convent plan beneath, and of the valley all round. But we gasped

abominably in the tepid air during the ascent of the tower; and, afterwards, having paid our woman-guide a trifle, we set out for Miramar, which is only half an hour beyond.

We left the Valley Beautiful—as its Spanish name means—by a western outlet, which soon brought us to the coast. The cliffs below us, towards the Mediterranean, and above us, on the right, were very low. But it seemed a little painful to notice so many posts of warning with the word " vedado" (forbidden) upon them. The truth is that we had got into the domain of the Archduke Luis Salvator of Austria, who spends months annually in this sequestered nook of Europe. As we had previously met the Archduke's secretary in Palma, and received a cordial invitation to present ourselves at the Villa, we hoped to make His Highness's acquaintance, and also see something of the art treasures which he has amassed in Majorca.

It now fell dark rapidly. The sun had gone below the sea-line ere we reached the Archduke's guest-house, and a rather curious mist crept up the woods from the water. We were far above the Mediterranean, and yet so near it, that we could not see the base of the rocks along which our road was cut. This gives some idea of the picturesqueness of the western coast of Majorca.

The guest-house reached at last, we were assured by the old woman in charge—she had a fine nut-cracker face—that we should be well bedded in it. The building is not pretentious; but it is large and has a superb situation on the edge of the cliff. Thus assured, we strolled off in the gloaming down the woods towards the Archduke's house. In its way, nothing could well have been more romantic than our experiences of the next hour or so. We completely lost our bearings. We came upon artificial waterfalls and bathing pools with marble balustrades, little temple-like buildings perched on the extremity of precipices, some with statues and some with other fantastic decorations; flights of steps, seemingly interminable, and the most lovely little gardens imbedded in the steep woods of olive and ilex. But we could find nothing like an inhabited house. Meanwhile, the moon came out and shone upon us through the trees. However, though it gave a deal of sentimental beauty to our surroundings, it did not help us a bit as a guide. At length we tired of the search and wandered back as best we could.

The closeness of the woods relaxed us almost as much as the Valldemosa Glen had done. We were thus exceedingly relieved when, quite late, we again reached the guest-house and sat to our supper.

One feature of the Archduke's guest-house is the fact that the platters and crocks are all Majorcan ware. They did not commend themselves to us for their beauty. The tumblers were, indeed, very common sand-cast things; but their very coarseness was a quaint sort of attraction. The room, too, being a long one, with merely a rough, uncovered table in the middle, and hard seats to it, and with a sort of night-light for illumination, was amusing. There were some other pilgrims at the one extremity of the room, feasting on wine and lettuces; but we could see very little of them, though we saw their simple meal being carried to them. After supper we smoked a cigar apiece, strolled once more into the misty moonlight, and listened to the buzzing of the night insects, and then retired to our room. The guest-house sheets were like the guest-house crockery—rough but clean. We slept very well on them, and arose at eight o'clock refreshed.

It was a brilliant morning, cloudless and with every promise of great heat. We, therefore, excused ourselves from collars, at least during our projected twelve-mile walk to Soller. The dame provided chocolate and buns—the conventional Majorcan breakfast—and then gave us "God speed," being evidently much pleased with our gratuity of a couple of pesetas (one shilling and eightpence). It must be understood that the guest-house is not an inn, but a courteous concession by the Archduke to the needs of the travelling public, which is not very large in Palma. We might have requited our night's lodging with thanks and nothing more, though that would have been a trifling mean.

The splendour of the day quite determined us to forego a morning call at the archducal villa, which we saw from the high-road soon after starting. After all, had we not seen curios of all kinds in the Palma houses; and further, why should we intrude upon the most precious hours of a student like His Highness simply to satisfy our curiosity? We took it all for granted, therefore, and strode on in the sunlight, with the Mediterranean hundreds of feet below on the one hand, and the mountains gradually heightening upon the other hand. This part of the island shows

how laborious the Majorcan agriculturist can be. The mountains were terraced for hundreds of feet up, and vines were set on the artificial gardens thus heavily buttressed against the hillsides. Now and then, after protracted rains, there is dire calamity on these slopes. The water makes a clean breach from the mountain-tops through the gardens, tumbling their supports to pieces, and doing all it can to break the hearts of the poor Majorcans. They do but set to work again afterwards, however, with unwearying perseverance.

We walked for an hour, and hunger made itself felt. But of wayside inns or aught of the kind there are none in Majorca. It grew tiresome. We called at a certain villa perched on a precipitous knoll seaward, with some elaborate marble decorations; but the laughing damsels who came to us told us they were not innkeepers. True, they refreshed us gratis with milk and plied us with questions, but aught more solid they seemed to think unnecessary. By the way, we were much struck here with the number of dogs about the premises. There were eleven or twelve, including a couple of gigantic boarhounds, which stood six feet high on their hind legs. A felonious-minded tramp would meet with a desperately warm reception in such a house.

On we went, enthusiastic enough about the beauty of our surroundings, but even more and more hungry. We came to Deya, a superb amphitheatrical recess from the coast, with water falling down its sides from the mountains, and a wonderful luxuriance of gardens and vegetation. The houses here were quite in the back of the recess, with orange and lemon-trees all about them, and looking beautifully clean after the Majorcan fashion. Old ladies and pretty brown-faced damsels were sitting in the cool inner rooms spinning and gossiping. Outside was the hot sunlight and the white blossoms of innumerable fruit-trees. By the trickling water-sides maiden-hair fern grew like a weed, and the little orchards were thick with asphodels and other flowers. But alas, for all this beauty, Deya could not confess to an inn. "You had much better," said a villager, "go on to Soller. Oh, yes, you will be there very soon—caramba! on such a fine day, too!"

So on we had to go and reached Soller at about one o'clock. Our descent into it from the cliff road was striking. The road is a magnificent zigzag, but much

too tedious for pedestrians. We therefore went in a bee-line as well as we could, jumping down from terrace to terrace, and feeling the temperature warmer every few minutes. It may be well to say that the direct route between Soller and Palma is another climb up the mountains, with engineering work that is reckoned one of the most noticeable things in the island.

Never have I seen such luxuriance of vegetation as this valley of Soller showed us. The gardens teemed with blossoms. The valley is like Valldemosa in its outline, pent in with mountains completely save for a neck-like pass towards the Mediterranean, and three or four similar steep ascents through the mountains. As for the town, it is quite large, though straggling, with a population of nearly ten thousand people.

We made our way up its cobbled streets, and were soon welcomed in the "Hôtel de la Paz," the cool vestibule of which was a treat after our few hours' scorching in the sun. In an inner room tables were laid, and nothing remained for us to do except order dinner and await it with Christian fortitude. There were some Spanish ladies in the vestibule with nosegays of huge yellow roses, evidently willing to converse with us. Even they confessed that Soller was unconscionably hot.

While dinner was preparing, we strolled about the town and looked into the houses. For orderliness and cleanliness these domestic interiors cannot be beaten. They were worthy of the neatest of Dutch villages. The god whitewash is eminently sacrificed to here; and a very fine contrast to their walls are the deep-complexioned women-folk in their black silk head-gear and their blue cotton gowns. They one and all seemed complimented by our notice of their houses; asked us in and pointed out their domestic implements, laughed, and chatted, and said "Caramba!" without end.

Behind our hotel is the river of Soller, which has a very brief course, seeing that the mountains whence it descends are immediately round the town. There was little enough water in it this April day, but they told us that trout are more than a mere tradition of it. Also we were told of a melancholy day some years ago when, after a heavy storm, the river rose about twenty feet in as many hours and carried a good deal of Soller into the Mediterranean. No doubt the following spring the valley gardens did their best to atone for this calamity by increased luxuriance.

We dined admirably here, with just the trifles of civilisation which are so grateful to the unexpectant traveller. Our attendants were dark-eyed, sweet-tongued damsels whose gaze never seemed off us, so anxious were they to anticipate our needs. Of the Soller wine I cannot say very much. We tried two or three kinds, and found a white wine the most drinkable. Dinner over, it was much more congenial to sit and smoke in the cool vestibule looking out into the street than to prowl forth upon the hot cobbles. But towards evening we took heart and went out. The atmosphere had cooled amazingly, for the sun had gone behind the western mountain barrier. The streets were alive with merry little blue-gowned boys and girls, to whom we proved a great attraction. They ran after us with the words "Caramba!" and "caballero" upon their eager young tongues, and did not heed the foray made upon them—apparently for our relief—by a kindly old dame with a broom. However, our pace soon threw them off. We walked in the cooling but still warm air all up the river-bed to the sea, arriving at length at the port of Soller, a circular pool, cliff-bound save where a shingle beach stretched towards the town. It is quite a strange little harbour, with fair anchorage for yachts of good size. Here, too, we saw the remains of the old fort of Soller, a massive round building commanding the head of the bay, and superbly situated. Later, we learnt that a foreign tourist was so captivated by this dilapidated and wholly abandoned building that he offered ten thousand pounds for it and a certain amount of land adjacent. This offer was munificent enough; but no, the Majorcans would not think of it. They love their land in an extraordinary degree, and the man must be next door to starvation ere he will part with it.

On this shingly beach we lay in idleness for a while, pelting the water while the warm southern night stole on; then when the stars were out and the moon hung over one of the mountain pinnacles, we retraced our steps up the defile. A mosquito or two warned us that we might have a restless night—a warning which, thank goodness, was belied. The lemon-gardens by the wayside tempted us to lay hands on some of the fruit, which seemed infinite in supply. A sweet lemon or two proved a light but acceptable prelude to the beds that awaited us in our hotel.

I have nothing but praise to say of this

Soller hotel. We slept well, and the cleanliness and cheapness were both good qualities. Once only did I wake in the night, and that was to hear the mellow voice of the Soller watchman in the streets proclaiming that it was a fine night. It was positively soothing to listen to this announcement made in so agreeable a fashion.

Neither fleas nor mosquitoes vexed us in the dark hours, and so we turned out at six the next morning in capital condition for the long day that was before us. We proposed to make for a mountain monastery distant fully fifteen miles of very rough climbing. With this intention we were not to be satisfied with a Spanish breakfast, but had eggs and ham and much else to help us onwards. Also, we filled a bag with provisions, including a big bottle of wine, and slung it over the shoulders of the square-built lad who was to be our guide.

We were off before seven o'clock, which was none too soon, although the sun had not yet found its way into Soller's sequestered corner. For a couple of miles we had easy walking, but every step brought us nearer to what seemed merely a grey mountain wall some two to three thousand feet high, broken into startling pinnacles tufted with scrub and draped with ivy and brambles. High over this to the north was the bold square head of Ping Mayor, the monarch of Majorca. It was just this wall of mountain that eventually we had to scale. We paused for a moment at the base of it and gazed upwards. A man could hardly see anything more abrupt.

Of course the track zigzagged upwards with extreme precipitousness. The ravine to the right grew momentarily more formidable. Yet even here, scratched out of the precipices, were tiny little patches of vines and vegetables, which the indefatigable Majorcans were cultivating at a venture. They had to do their hodding almost with one leg in the air, but they did it nevertheless, and found time and nerve to sing while they worked.

A slip of a river dropped over the mountain wall and reached the valley by a series of cascades. This moisture of course much aided vegetation. Of flowers there was no lack; they starred the rock, cyclamens being especially abundant, and ferns in great variety. But the chief attraction to us as we rested frequently and gasped for breath, were the stupendous pinnacles of

the mountain which we climbed past and left beneath us. The storms of ages have played picturesque havoc with these limestone masses; and it was one of the finest sights imaginable to look down as we did with these rocks in the foreground, and the rich green and golden sunlit plain of Soller still farther below. One jump and it seemed as if we could have landed at our starting-point.

This went on for an hour, and then we were on a sort of pocket plateau, with a green dimpling mountain nook to the right and a single farmhouse. One or two of the final precipices which we had to get by were quite trying; a false step, and down we should have gone hundreds of feet without a chance of salvation. But we came through it all in safety, and found ourselves in a long mountain recess with Ping Mayor close in front, and a very alluring pyramidal peak on the east. At one time we proposed to scale Ping Mayor, but its flanks are distinctly hard, and the foothold looked dangerous. We preferred, therefore, to vary our excursion by climbing the pyramidal mountain instead. It cost us a good half-hour, and was awkward near the summit. But we were repaid for our exertions by a magnificent prospect all over the interior of Majorca, and also a sight of Palma itself, white and radiant, against the sea. From Alcadia in the north to the capital in the south the island was displayed to us.

However, we could not afford to be extravagant with our time; and so we soon descended, and began a hot and wearisome tramp up the whitened recess, wholly exposed to the sun. This was distinctly a painful hour and a half. Even the graces of Ping Mayor, who formed our left-hand barrier all the time and showed some brilliant colouring, could not atone to us for our discomfort.

But, as I have said, the chief characteristic of Majorca is its astounding and abrupt contrasts of scenery. At the end of the five-mile tramp we came to a farmhouse, with an ilex wood on one side of it, and a sweet brook flowing through the wood. Here we halted, and in the midst of a wild garden of lilies, asphodels, and common orchids, lay down and enjoyed the shade for half an hour. Then on we went again, and by an impressive turn we left the hot mountain glen and found ourselves suddenly deep in woods with a roaring green torrent at our side. It was a very Pass of Thermopylae which we had to negotiate, with

this river as the only apparent gateway. Afterwards we were in thick shade, the ilex and firs and beeches seeming in a state of primeval density. This was the grandest hour or two Majorca afforded us. We ascended and descended, even with huge peaks towering above us and visible through the interstices of the tree-tops. The greenery of the forest was delightful. The trees were in fresh leafage, and ferns were here, there, and everywhere. Still, even this grandeur had its drawback. The exceeding steepness of the way and the noon tide heat told on us. It was a satisfaction to mark that they told equally on our guide also.

This went on for two hours, and then we dined at the mouth of a cave from out which a spring bubbled, with the usual wealth of verdure all about it. Our dinner was rather messy, thanks to the jerking of its bearer; but an excellent appetite and the sweet situation of the dining-room made us overlook this defect.

We passed one tiny group of dark red houses in the forest, and towards four o'clock came to Lluch, where we were to sleep. Lluch is reckoned the most romantic spot in Majorca, which is saying a good deal. It is not so much a village as a monastery turned into a school, but with certain venerable traditions—a Virgin of Lluch that works miracles, for example—which constantly attract pilgrims. The monastery was our inn, and here we were given a great, red-tiled room, with two odd recesses containing beds, and with prints on the walls telling of the wonders wrought by Our Lady of Lluch. We were fed in the kitchen with sundry others, and of our free will gave a dollar in the morning for our accommodation, which was about five times as much as was expected.

Before supping, however, we wandered off up this romantic nook, and came to a great yawning break in the country, with a waterfall of a hundred and fifty feet, and lower cascades, all leading to a second spacious enclosed valley, for all the world like a Dutch "polder" in its general shape, though far prettier than any landscape in Holland. The brambles and wild fig-trees were, however, matted so thickly about the waterway that we gave up the tempting design of following the stream into this valley within (and below) a valley. Besides, the air here was most relaxing. It was a supreme effort to walk a mile or two, and we both felt utterly unstrung by supper-

time. We were not well pleased, moreover, by the appearance of the clouds, which gathered in black battalions about our mountain nest by nightfall.

A monastery servitor called us at six again the following day. We scurried from our nocturnal nooks to the window to look out at the weather. There was no doubt about it, rain had fallen in the night. The fruit-trees in the great neglected garden held much moisture on their leaves, and the soil looked spongy. The air, too, had a cool freshness which was quite a new experience for us in Majorca. I don't know exactly the altitude of Lluch, but should guess it to be more than two thousand feet above the sea level. This in April means much. In summer, we were told, people come hither from the plains, and thoroughly enjoy the bracing change.

We took our breakfast of buns and chocolate in the grand old refectory of the house. There were antique portraits on the walls, and some paintings of fruit and game which did not seem worth hanging. Here, too, the principal of the establishment came and shook hands with us, and exhibited, as if it were a most interesting curiosity, the carte de visite of an English captain who had found his way to Lluch from the marshes by Albufera, where he had been shooting snipe. I have little doubt Englishmen will in future be welcomed genially at Lluch if they declare their nationality. But they must be able to grope about in the Spanish language, as English is quite unknown here. The same may be said of Majorca as a whole, though in Palma the nobility and gentry understand it.

At one time we projected walking on to Pallenca in the north, and thence descending to Puebla, where the little Majorca railway has its terminus. But the weather portents grew decidedly bad. The principal shook his head at the clouds; so, too, did the handsome lad whom he obtained for us as a guide. It seemed unwise to get into the mountains again. Besides, they were so black with vapour shadows that we could see nothing from them. The order was given, therefore, for Inca, which is about ten miles from Lluch, and in the hot plain country.

A pretty, but conventional southern scene was before us as we strode up the monastery precincts. The ancient battered stone cross stands near the beginning of the avenue, and round its base several mule-men and a woman were upon their

knees. This cross is the centre of many devotional exercises during the summer festivals of Our Lady of Lluch.

We had gone but a little way along the thigh of a mountain when we came to a spectacle of activity and devastation that seemed almost sacrilegious. The road-men were at work blasting and hewing at the hard basaltic rocks. They had already reached within two miles of Lluch from the lowlands. By now—1892—therefore, the tourist may drive in his carriage from Inca, or even Palma, to this lovely sequestered mountain resort. In all probability a good hotel will soon rise here, which may or may not be regarded as a gain for the public. Truly, when the Spaniards do set about road-making they carry the work through with admirable pluck. Majorca is worthy to rank with the Canary Islands for the magnificence of its highways of the first order. All the same, we did not care for this apparition of energy in the middle of the mountains.

But anon we left the road-men behind us, and passed from one mountain slope to another, ever descending. It was a race with the clouds, in which, however, at length we were bested. The rain fell in sheets. There was little shelter; but we managed to screen under a boulder-slab and an umbrella-pine with fair success.

The scenery was not so sensational as that behind us; but it was decidedly bold. The contrast, too, between the hot yellow plain at our feet—of which we had glimpses at every mountain corner—and our own gloomy neighbourhood was racy. At length we were well out of the hill district, with immense olive-woods about us and barley fields, with here and there a white house, and a line of windmills in the distance betokening the town of Inca. The sun burnt us in the downright Majorcan manner. The white dust rose in clouds with the storm gusts from the mountains, and we were nearly choked at times. It was by no means an enjoyable experience after our mountain days.

The white road seemed interminable, and the windmills unattainable. We went through a village with spotless domestic interiors and clay-coloured peasants, who seemed mightily astonished to see strangers like ourselves; and well they may have been, for it was madness in us to tramp in this part of the island. They gave us distasteful wine to drink, wh'ch did but increase our desire for an honest hearty meal at Inca.

Very glad we were at length to reach this pretty quaint old town, with its shops and big church, and orange gardens, and chief of all its inn, where the good people promised us a meal in a flash of lightning; which meant in rather more than an hour's time.

We tarried at Inca until the evening train to Palma. From the railway the little town looked peculiarly winning, with its lichenized buildings and bright spring verdure. But here, as everywhere in Majorca, the chief glory lay in the mountains. They were terrifically black in the rear; coal-black is the very word for them and the clouds over them. As we tarried at one of the little stations in the sunlight, with barley, and olive-trees, and vineyards all around, and the chirrup of grasshoppers loud in our ears, we heard also the bellow of thunder from the hills. It was as clear as anything that we were well out of that romantic part of the island. Our walking kit was for fine weather alone, and we were favoured with exceptional kindness, for in the west of the island in spring the thunderstorms are proverbial.

THE UNBIDDEN GUEST.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

CHESNEY HALL was in the market again. It was really quite remarkable how often Chesney Hall had been in the market in the course of the last century or so. The original Chesneys having died out somewhere about the reign of good Queen Anne, the bare bones of the estate had passed to a distant relative who, not being able to keep up the old place in the style it deserved, had done the wisest thing he could under the circumstances, and sold it.

After that the Hall passed from one purchaser to another, for somehow it never remained in any one's hands very long. It was a delightful old mansion, charmingly situated in well-wooded grounds, and possessing almost every attribute the heart of the antiquarian could desire. But we are not all antiquarians; many of us have aspirations which even endless vistas of black oak wainscoting and monumental carved chimney-pieces fail to satisfy. Besides, to use the words of one of those who came and went: "There's something queer about the place. I won't go so far as to say that it is haunted—after all a ghost is decidedly good form, and I know some people, with-

out a grandfather to their backs, who would be willing to give almost any price for the real genuine family article. There may be a ghost at the Hall, and there may not; but what I object to chiefly is the feeling of being there on sufferance, which I can't get rid of, and won't stand. And then there's that other affair — deuced queer that was!"

Of course this might not have been the objection in every case; but the fact remained that the people who came and joyfully took possession of the old Hall generally took still more joyful leave. To quote one more authority, and that of a member of the opposite sex: "I can't exactly say what it was, dear, but to tell the truth, I never felt thoroughly comfortable all the time we were there—that was three years, you know, and all that while I seemed to be doing nothing but look over my shoulder. Then there was that other drawback I told you of—though of course that didn't matter in the summer; but for the rest of the year it was very inconvenient, and no explanation worth calling an explanation to account for it."

Now Chesney Hall, after having been for a period in the possession of a wealthy ironmonger, was again in the market, and the question was, would a purchaser be forthcoming this time? —for it was impossible to deny that the reputation of the Hall had suffered a little through its frequent change of hands. The question was soon answered, and in less than six months Chesney Hall became the property of a Mr. Joseph Blenkinsaw, of whom little was known beyond the fact that he was supposed to be worth at least a million of money, and was apparently bitten by the desire to transform himself from a mere City man into a country gentleman.

This at least was the rumour, and though rumour is not always to be depended on, it was not so very far out in this case. Mr. Joseph Blenkinsaw was perhaps not worth quite so much as was reported; but for all that he was a very wealthy man who, having acquired a fortune through successfully trading in hides, or tallow, or something equally odiferous, had of late had it borne in upon him that having spent the greater part of his life in the gathering together of riches, it was time that he devoted himself to the enjoyment of the same.

This idea having for some time past been presenting itself more and more clearly to his mind, Mr. Joseph Blenkinsaw suddenly announced to his family his intention

of retiring from business, and devoting the remainder of his span to an entirely new round of duties.

"I have been turning it over in my mind for some months past," he explained collectively to his wife and son and daughter, "and I have made up my mind to try the country. It would be of no earthly good retiring unless I went right away. So long as I remained within a reasonable distance of town I should always be running up and down."

His family agreed with him. They usually did agree with him, having been brought up to do so.

"Besides," he went on, "pure country air, with plenty of exercise and no worry, ought to add a good ten years to one's life, and with my means no doubt we should be able to take a very good position. I shall look out for a house and estate—I should prefer something old and ancestral—go in for good old-fashioned hospitality and that sort of thing, and," he waved his right hand expressively, "there you are, don't you know, or, rather, there you will be."

The murmurs of approbation from the family circle having subsided, he cast a reflective eye upon his offspring. Both were good-looking in their way—which was not the same way as their father's—the girl, indeed, having, as it were, only escaped beauty by the tip of her nose.

Mr. Blenkinsaw's eye brightened with a mingling of the fatherly and commercial instinct.

"Geraldine, with her looks, should make a fine match. Arthur, too, with his advantages and a University education, ought to be able to pick up some one worth having. However, of course that is all in the Future."

And this is how the Blenkinsaws came to Chesney Hall.

Chesney Hall! Mr. Blenkinsaw used to roll the name over his tongue withunction. It looked well, it sounded well, and it even seemed to taste well, but, for all that—why not Blenkinsaw Hall? —not just at present, perhaps, but in the Future. Mr. Blenkinsaw was fond of talking about the Future—with a capital "F."

Meanwhile nothing has been said about Mrs. Blenkinsaw; she has been hinted at and that is all. In fact Mrs. Blenkinsaw's whole personality seemed to consist of hints which had not been carried out. Her complexion, her hair, her features, her attire, were all of a vague and sketchy

description, as though they had never been properly filled in. In character she was the same. Her likes and dislikes, her thoughts and opinions, were mostly the reflection of some one else's. Under these circumstances it was the more remarkable that she should have ventured to take a sudden and incomprehensible dislike to her new abode. The first sight of it made her turn pale, and as she crossed its threshold for the first time she shivered and made as though she would have turned back.

"Emma!" exclaimed Mr. Blenkinsaw, in justifiable amazement. "Why do you hang back? That is not the proper way in which to make your entrance into your new home. What do you think of the hall with its magnificent black oak chimney-piece? Rather different to our modern fireplaces, eh? And how is it you don't remark the effect of the stained-glass window, with the arms of the Chesneys, and the Musicians' Gallery, and the Dutch tiles, and the groined roof? Of course, I am quite aware that you cannot help admiring it all, but I should prefer you to express your admiration a little more volubly. After the trouble I've taken, and the money I've laid out, I must say I think a little something of the sort might have been looked for."

"My dear Joseph," murmured the lady in faltering tones, "it—it's perfectly charming, but—but I can't help thinking of what the lawyer said about—you know what, and really I'm afraid you'll think me unkind, and I'm very, very sorry, but I'm afraid I prefer Streatham."

Streatham, indeed! No wonder Mr. Blenkinsaw felt like quoting certain lines from "King Lear" on the subject of ingratitude, only unfortunately he could not quite call them to mind beyond the fact that they began with "Blow, blow," and undoubtedly this was a blow, and a heavy blow to him to think that a member of his family should actually be so lost to all sense of what was right and fitting as to prefer Streatham and its associations to Chesney Hall, with its park and its plantations, its avenue, its imposing entrance, its banqueting hall, its irregularities and inconveniences, and, above all, its genuine ancestral flavour. It was—it was past all belief, and absurd beyond words, but for all that it was the cause of Mr. Blenkinsaw's first disappointment in connection with his new home.

If it had only been any one else but

Emma—Geraldine or Arthur for instance. The young people of the present day were only too fond of finding fault—but Emma, who had never been known to possess an opinion exclusively her own before!

However, he soon forgot all about it as he made his first royal progress over his new domain; pointing out this and that and the other; claiming praise not only for what he had done, but also for what he had left undone. On the whole, his taste really called for approbation; for, unlike the majority of men who have made a large fortune by buying and selling, he had been content to leave many things as he found them, and had avoided the Scylla of over-gilding, as well as the Charybdis of plate-glass.

To be sure, the ornate modern furniture which had been transferred from Mrs. Blenkinsaw's lamented Streatham appeared a little out of tune with its surroundings; and it even appeared, from the awkward attitudes assumed by some of the chairs and tables, that they were themselves aware of the incongruity.

Geraldine and Arthur Blenkinsaw raved about the place, and for the first week or two were always coming upon fresh delightful surprises in the shape of quaint cupboards, unsuspected trap-doors, and even an old oak chest or two, which, with other remnants of antiquity, had long ago been cast aside as lumber, but were now eagerly brought to light and made much of. But the chief treasure-trove of all was a Family Portrait. It was discovered in the corner of a cobwebby garret, standing with its face to the wall behind a pile of ancient dusty tomes, few of which bore a date later than that of the seventeenth century. The two young explorers, encouraged by previous successes, had penetrated there in search of the curious and the antique, had pounced upon the volumes, the merest contact with which produced a violent fit of sneezing, and finally had spied and disinterred the ancestor—for that it was a genuine ancestor no one could doubt for an instant, though at the time of the discovery the Portrait was so black with age and dirt, and so festooned with cobwebs, that it was impossible to predict the sex.

Arthur Blenkinsaw, having removed a little of the accumulation with his handkerchief—after which he forgot himself and wiped his face with the same, with variegated results—exposed to view a chin and a portion of lace collar.

"I think it must be a woman, Gerry," he remarked thereupon; "men don't wear lace collars."

"Oh, don't they though—at least, didn't they? Why, have you forgotten Charles the First's lace collar that he wore at his execution, on a velvet cushion at Madame Tussaud's? Besides, look at the chin! That looks like hair on it. I'm convinced it's a man; anyhow, we'll take it down to father; he'll be delighted, particularly if it should turn out to be one of the original Chesneys. Ugh! that's the fourteenth dead spider I've come across. As for you, Arthur, you look like a study in black and white."

So they carried it down in solemn procession, Geraldine going first to clear the way, while Arthur followed bearing the precious relic. Both of them were dusty and disorganized as to person, and more or less streaky of countenance, but both wore an expression of complacency which not even smudges could obscure; and it was in this manner that they burst in upon their father in the room which he was pleased to designate his study—not that he ever studied anything in it except the "County Directory" or the money article in "The Times."

Mr. Blenkinsaw was charmed. He had the picture carefully packed and despatched forthwith to one of the best known firms for cleaning and renovation, and awaited the result with impatience. Meanwhile Mrs. Blenkinsaw still pined for Streatham.

For some time after the arrival of the new people the neighbourhood was agitated by the great question—to visit or not to visit? Mr. Blenkinsaw had been in business, and though he had now cast himself adrift from his plebeian associations, he and his were nevertheless enveloped in that commercial atmosphere which is so excessively trying to patrician lungs. Still, as time went on and reports were circulated as to the kind of establishment maintained at the Hall, together with an account of the number and variety of the new equipages which had been sent down from London, it began to be felt that such qualifications should not be allowed to go unrecognised. Some one had it on good authority, too, that though old Blenkinsaw was a mere parvenu, and the wife a nonentity, the son and daughter were really quite presentable, and would be extremely eligible parts.

So the mountain came to Mahomet and

left cards, and Mr. Blenkinsaw began to forget the City and its ways, and regard himself as the founder of a family. Indeed, to such an extent and with such rapidity did this oblivion increase, that at the end of some six months' residence at the Hall he could hardly have undertaken to direct any one from St. Paul's Churchyard to the Monument.

To go back a little way. Allusion has twice been made at the commencement of this narrative to a drawback of some kind which existed independently of those other intangible disqualifications, the origin and seat of which were supposed to be the imagination. What the nature of this drawback was I will now explain.

On the day that the final arrangements concerning the purchase of Chesney Hall were completed, a somewhat singular statement was made to the new purchaser by one of the members of the legal firm in whose hands all business in connection with the sale of the estate was vested.

"By the way," he remarked, with an elaborate affectation of indifference, "there is one circumstance to which I may as well call your attention, though it is really hardly worth mentioning. The fact is," he went on, instituting an imaginary search for a fictitious document among the papers before him, "though I can't vouch for it myself (whatever can I have done with it?), but there is a—what shall I call it?—a little superstition with regard to your new purchase which concerns the great fireplace in the old banqueting hall. You have remarked the magnificent carved chimney-piece, which is supposed to be one of the finest examples of the kind to be found anywhere? Yes; well, the report is," here he affected to discover the object of his search, "the report is that no fire can ever be lighted upon that hearth, or if lighted will not burn."

Mr. Blenkinsaw opened his eyes and his mouth, and got as far as, "Well, I nev——"

"Of course you are at liberty to try," cut in the lawyer, "but I am advised to recommend you not to make the attempt, as you are certain to be unsuccessful, and it is even supposed," here he laughed a dry, dusty laugh, "it is even supposed to bring you ill-luck."

"But why on earth——" began Mr. Blenkinsaw.

"My dear sir," interrupted the lawyer again, "I know nothing—absolutely nothing. I should say it is probably

owing to some fault in the construction—but I am no authority on chimneys. For all that," he concluded, "it is sometimes as well to—er—humour these old traditions, without which scarcely any gentleman's residence can be considered complete."

Mr. Blenkinsop, after a little consideration of the matter, found himself disposed to take the lawyer's advice. After all, a tradition was a decidedly gentlemanly sort of appurtenance. It was the kind of thing which only went with the best families, and was one of the few articles which even a first-class upholsterer could not undertake to supply. All the same he didn't believe it. Did you mean to tell him—Joseph Blenkinsop, Esq., of Chesney Hall—that he couldn't light a fire on his own hearth? Pshaw! He cherished the tradition and was willing to humour it, but at the same time he scoffed at the idea; and so, when it was imparted to them, did the other members of his family, with the exception of Mrs. Blenkinsop, who was understood to express herself vaguely in favour of a gas-stove. However, as it was mild spring weather when the Blenkinsops came to the Hall, the question of fire or no fire was postponed, and Mr. Blenkinsop hugged his tradition to his bosom and affected to believe it. Moreover, he dined daily in the banqueting hall, which could have accommodated half the county, and grew in pride and importance daily; though Mrs. Blenkinsop, who at dinner occupied a position with her back to the fireplace, complained feebly of draught, and seemed to see a Sword of Damocles suspended over the soup tureen.

UNCONSCIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS.

IN the year 1889 the present writer laid before the readers of ALL THE YEAR ROUND some observations and reflections on the subject of Memory, Somnambulism, and Alternate Consciousness.* We saw then how in sleep not only may the mind be lulled into temporary forgetfulness, but also how latent memory may be revived. We saw how there are, in some people at any rate, certain states of mind sharply divided from each other, yet connected by the bridge of memory, so that two minds seem to be

alternately operating in the same person. We saw also, by some curious examples of somnambulic consciousness, that men may have a double memory—one side latent when the other is active. Since we wrote, the subject of hypnotism has occupied a great deal of popular, as well as of scientific, attention, and its various characteristics have been warmly discussed.

Yet the extent to which the cerebral faculties are really awake during artificial sleep has not yet been fully determined, and there is one aspect of the subject to which we invite the consideration of our readers for a little. It is this: Is a person in a condition of sleep artificially produced (i.e., hypnotised), necessarily in a state of suspended free-will?

It may be remembered that, writing about artificial somnambulism, we said that the peculiarity of the magnetic sleep is that, while much deeper than the natural sleep, the "inner waking" is also more complete and more clear. "When we endeavour to recall a dream," we said, "we can usually only reproduce a confused mental picture, composed of disjointed materials taken, without apparent connection, out of our waking life; and yet, if a dreamer were asked while dreaming if he slept, he would assuredly answer, 'No,' for the dream is with him an actual exercise of consciousness." And so with the "inner waking" of somnambulists—it is reality to their intelligence. In ordinary sleep, those who have been born blind have dream-images, and it is said that in somnambulism the born-blind actually see.

So far, memory and impression; but what we have to consider now is suggestion, or even conversion, in the mesmeric state. Can a naturally good and moral person be prompted to criminal actions in a hypnotic state? Can a person with naturally criminal instincts be kept to moral courses under the influence of mesmerism?

The French school of mesmerists hold, as a rule, to the belief that in a hypnotic subject free-will can be so obliterated that the most moral may become vitiated, and the most high-minded perverted, under the influence of the magnetiser. This is so terrible an assumption that one welcomes any arguments and examples in evidence of its unsoundness. Professor Delboeuf, who has written much about hypnotism in various learned periodicals, has quite lately afforded some, of which we gratefully avail ourselves. This scientist, it should be

* See "Somnambulism," No. 27, Third Series; "Some Phenomena of Memory," No. 30; and "Alternate Consciousness," No. 33.

explained, introduced hypnotism into the science-course of the Royal Academy of Belgium by means of two works of his own, and himself began the practice in the firm belief that the subject mesmerised becomes the property, so to speak, of the magnetiser. This is what he wrote in describing a visit to the Salpêtrière some years ago :

"The somnambulist in the hands of the hypnotiser . . . is a slave, with no other will than that of his ruler, and in order to fulfil the commands laid upon him he will push precaution, prudence, cunning, dissimulation, and falsehood to their extremest limits."

Assuredly, then, the power of the hypnotiser must be one of the most dangerous things on the face of the earth. But is it so great, or may not the fear of it be unduly exaggerated? The learned writer, almost immediately after publishing the words just quoted, was struck with the difficulty, which seems to amount to an impossibility, of obtaining from a hypnotised subject an absolute abnegation of will-power, whilst at the same time allowing him the necessary free-will to cope with any unforeseen accidents which may occur in the completion of the orders he is to carry out. As the result of further study and experiment M. Delboeuf has come to the conclusion that a villain who is contemplating the perpetration of a crime will not easily find an accomplice in a (hypnotised) subject of good moral standing, and that in any case such an accomplice would not only be inapt but compromising.

Here, however, is an experiment which seems to afford contrary evidence. It occurred at Nancy last year, in the hospital there, and was witnessed by some five or six Belgian professors and physiologists. One of the patients, a big, strong man, was thrown into a magnetic sleep, and ordered that when he awoke he was to go and steal an orange from the bed of another patient in the ward. He was told that what he was about to do was wrong, and might be punished, but that, nevertheless, he must do it. He was waked, and arose with the appearance of one who had something on his mind, and, when questioned, said he had something to do, but would not tell what it was. Presently he walked over to the bed of the other patient—a "mate" of his own, who had heard what had been ordered, and who stoutly expressed the belief that his friend would

not steal from him—and when he thought he was not being watched, seized the orange and slipped it into his pocket.

This would seem a case of criminal suggestion promptly acted upon by an innocent subject. But when the man was, a little later, charged with the theft, he first denied it, and then justified it on the plea (which satisfies a good many consciences) that the man to whom the orange belonged had not seen it taken and would not miss it, and that "it's not stealing when it isn't missed." Subsequently it was discovered that this same "subject" was in the habit of abstracting a little tobacco from his companions on the same principle. In short, he had latent tendencies to theft, and was, therefore, an apt subject for criminal suggestion.

Here is a curious instance recorded in the "Revue Philosophique" of 1886, of an experiment in a college class :

"B. is in the hypnotic sleep. We wish to give him some peculiar order which he shall execute, after he is awake, at a special signal. The signal is to be a knock given by the Professor on the desk; the action, to carry a glass of water to the student E. He does not know any of the fifteen students present, nor has he yet heard their names. The pupils take their places without any special order, some standing, some sitting. B. is awakened, we chat a little, I give the signal, B. rises, fills a glass, and without the slightest sign of hesitation, carries it to the student before mentioned, who was sitting on one of the back benches beside a fellow-student. We looked at each other with stupefaction. The intention of the experiment had been to see how he would obey an obscure command. . . . I again throw him into the sleep, and I command him to carry a glass of water to the student Gerard. We are all standing, awaiting with impatience what will take place. B. fills the glass, and this time sends a questioning look over all the spectators, presents the glass first to one then to another; and, finally, I had to point out the student Gerard, to whom he brought the water and made him drink it. I again put him to sleep and asked him to whom he carried the first glass of water? 'To E.' 'Did you know him?' 'No.' 'How did you recognise him?' 'By his attitude; he looked as if he wanted to hide away.'"

What does this prove? Not the abnegation of free-will, but rather the sharpen-

ing of the faculties by hypnotism. B. knew that he had to do something, and was quick-minded enough to take his cue from his surroundings. Now, keeping in mind this experiment and its explanation, look at one recorded by Professor Liégeois, who is a strong upholder of the "absolute automatism" of the hypnotic subject.

"I offered N. a white powder, of the nature of which he is ignorant. I said to him, 'Pay great attention to what I am about to tell you. This paper contains arsenic. You will go presently to such a street to your Aunt M.—who is here now. You will take a glass of water, carefully dissolve the arsenic in it, and then you will offer it to your aunt.' 'Yes, sir.' That evening I received the following note from Madame M.: 'Madame M. begs leave to inform M. Liégeois that the experiment succeeded perfectly. Her nephew offered her the poison.' The criminal remembered nothing about it, and it was very difficult to persuade him that he had indeed wished to poison an aunt for whom he had a deep affection. The automatism had been complete."

Very difficult, indeed, one would imagine; but had the automatism been complete? The subject knew that his aunt was in the room when he was ordered to poison her, and that she heard every word of the order. When he woke up he knew he had to do something; but did he not also know that what he had to do was only an experiment, and that he could not seriously be expected to poison an aunt who was a party to the experiment? As M. Delboeuf pertinently remarks of similar experiments, a hypnotic subject is not an idiot—quite the reverse.

Now let us take two instances which seem dissimilar in result.

Dr. Liébault, a famous specialist, tells of the case of a workman whom he hypnotised and told to steal a couple of plaster figures from the mantelpiece of a house in which he was engaged on some job. This was direct criminal suggestion, which was at once acted on by the man. The incident was forgotten; but some three months later this same workman was arrested for the theft of a pair of trousers from a shop. Like the Nancy Hospital patient, Dr. Liébault's subject was naturally disposed to pilfering, and evidently did not need to be hypnotised to entertain criminal suggestions.

The other case is related by Professor Delboeuf of an experiment in his own family with a woman—referred to as "J."—who had been proved to be an excellent som-

nambulist, and who is referred to in several of Delboeuf's writings in connection with other experiments.

The story concerns a six-barrelled revolver, which, in the Professor's remote residence, was always kept loaded at a time when the country was in a disturbed state owing to strikes. The Professor happened to be from home, and one night the house was attempted. J. seized the revolver, knowing it to be loaded, and went to face the burglar, who fled. Thereafter J. slept with the loaded revolver beside her bed in a room on the ground-floor, being a woman of resolution and courage. The incident suggested an experiment to the Professor on his return, which had better be told in his own words:

"The 24th February, 1888, without communicating my intentions to anybody except my daughter, and that only at the very moment of beginning the experiment, I discharged the revolver. It was six o'clock in the evening. A young lady—herself an hypnotic subject—and my daughter were seated at a table cutting out articles from a newspaper, which they afterwards tied up in bundles. I called J., and at the moment she opened the door I hypnotised her by a motion. I said to her in an agitated voice: 'Here are some thieves who are carrying off papers.'

"J. came quickly forward and, turning towards me, said: 'No, sir; they are playing with them—why, sure enough, they are taking them!' Then she walked resolutely up to them and tore the papers out of their hands, put them on the table in front of her, and in an imperious tone said: 'Don't you touch them any more.'

"I said: 'You are never going to let those knaves remain in the house! Run and fetch the revolver.'

"J. ran without hesitation. She returned, holding the weapon in her hand, and stood on the threshold.

"'Fire!' I cried.

"'Sir, we must not kill them.'

"'Thieves? Why, certainly!'

"'No, sir! I will not kill them.'

"'You must.'

"'I won't do it'; and she walked backwards, still holding the revolver, I following her and energetically reiterating my command.

"'I won't, I won't do it. I will not murder.' She then placed the revolver on the floor, but cautiously. She continued to go backwards, I meanwhile insisting and following her. 'I will not do it.'

"Having come to a dead stand in the corner of the room she repulsed me violently, and I thought it prudent to awaken her, upon which she came to herself, smiling in her usual pleasant manner. She remembered, however, nothing whatever, although at the sight of the revolver lying on the floor she seemed to have a kind of vague recollection. She did not seem at all discomposed in manner. If this scene had taken place in a dream she would certainly have exhibited more excitement."

Here, then, we have a well-known hypnotic, supposed to be thoroughly under the influence of a master who could hypnotise her at any moment, but who refused to surrender her moral sense to the mesmeric influence. Unlike the two pilferers, she had no natural tendency to crime, and she shrank from crime even when otherwise ready to do all she was told.

What, then, is to be inferred? Probably, that J. was not the victim of a hallucination at all, but a sort of conscious unconscious actor in a play. Doubtless she recognised the two young ladies, and then, in obedience to the word of command, regarded them as robbers for the purposes of the play. In all this she would be sincere enough, and acting with a double consciousness only partly awakened. But when it came to the revolver, which she believed to be loaded, and to discharge which she knew—or thought—would be murder, then her moral nature asserted itself, and she was enabled to exercise her own free-will, even when otherwise acting as a puppet or automaton.

The whole subject is very curious, and this is an interesting illustration of one of its phases. The more we consider the matter the more we are convinced that hypnotised subjects are more or less conscious players in a part which they feel themselves compelled to play, knowing all the time it is only acting, even although when awakened they may be unable to recall their sensations and explain their movements.

Delboeuf now takes this view, and points to another illustration. If you extend the arm of a hypnotic and defy him to put it down, he seems to make an effort to lower it, but he makes no real effort. In fact, he does not bring his muscles into play at all; but if the spectators try to force him to change the position of his arm, he opposes all his muscular resistance. Why? Because he

knows that a certain thing is required of him by the person under whose influence he is for the time being.

Any one who has witnessed public exhibitions of mesmerism must be prepared to admit that hypnotic subjects may perfectly well realise that they are the subjects of experiments. Some are more facile than others, and will submit out of amiability or moral weakness to being put to all sorts of ridiculous uses for the amusement of the audience, while others will rebel when their finer feelings are aroused. Such cases go to prove that at least a number of hypnotics retain a certain amount of independence. Why should we suppose this is not true of all?

We cannot explain the psychological problem; we can only state its probable conditions, and these are certainly both more reasonable and more agreeable than the theory of absolute automatism. Delboeuf's theory now is that "persons in hypnosis will only execute acts similar to those they would naturally perform in dreams."

What do we all do in dreams? Pretty much what we do in waking life. The present writer, whose profession is journalism, constantly finds himself in dreams composing leading articles, and even tabulating masses of statistics, with which he has occasionally to deal. He has dreamed a whole three-volumed novel, and he has been conscious of laying down page after page of the most methodical (and doubtless the most wooden) of blank verse, not a line of which could he recall on waking. But he has never dreamed a sermon, nor a brief, nor a mathematical problem, nor a play, nor an essay on Greek verbs, nor a treatise on the integral calculus—doubtless because these are subjects which he would never think of attempting in waking life.

His experience is in no way peculiar. We all dream of things such as we have done or would like to do—not of things repugnant to our natures or foreign to our experiences. Coleridge could dream "Kubla Khan" because he was a poet, but he could never have dreamed of cutting the throat of Charles Lamb in order to procure the MS. of "A Dissertation on Roast Pig," to publish it as his own. Yet, conceivably, a most amiable and inoffensive novelist, whose business is to write stories of crime and sensation, might dream that he had committed a murder, not because he could or would commit one, even in a hypnotic state, but because he is tem-

porarily incorporated with one of the creatures of his own imagination.

We incline greatly to Delboeuf's now boldly avowed opinion—the reverse of what he formerly held—that hypnotism is less powerful in inciting to actions of grave moral import than the corrupting influence of word, example, avarice, or passion. The doctrine of the future, he holds, is the analogy between physiological and incited dreams. That is to say, if a hypnotised person appears to suppose that he is made of sugar or glass, to feel that he is melting in the rain, or is about to be shattered by a bystander; or if he thinks himself a lamp and sits on a table; or allows himself to be trundled like a wheelbarrow, we are not, therefore, to suppose that he has wholly surrendered his free-will. If a man refuses to steal or to strike a blow when ordered, or if a woman refuses to forget her modesty, then we must admit that the hypnotic subject has still power over himself, and that the influence of the mesmerist is limited by the moral nature of the subject.

Delboeuf, then, affirms this of the hypnotic condition, that, reasoning by analogy, the subject who refuses to give a blow will never be made to use the knife; and that the woman who refuses any token of affection will certainly resist any serious tampering with morals. What he maintains, and what has been our purpose to show, is, that even under hypnotic influence men and women preserve a sufficient portion of their intelligence, reason, and free-will to prevent them from doing what, in ordinary conditions, their consciences would not approve nor their habits sanction.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IV.

"I TOLD you so!" cried nurse next day, as she came in smiling over a basket of white lilies. "These are the last you'll get, I'm afraid, though," she went on with a quaint, disconsolate hitch of her eyebrows. "I let him get out of me how you'd treated the others. There's his card with these. I told him I was sure you knew him and didn't want to see him."

Lieut.-Colonel Miles Fortescue,
(late) Royal Artillery.

"I wish Dr. Millar was in the army! They do dress so much better than doctors!" sighed she, contemplating the card admiringly.

I heard a good deal about my visitor's handsome dark eyes, nice white moustache, courtly manners, hat, boots, and overcoat during the day, till I wondered what Dr. Millar would have said about it. The interview seemed to have been of the briefest, and confined to enquiries after my health and the prospect of an early interview.

Colonel Fortescue falsified nurse's predictions by renewing my supply of flowers daily, but did not come himself till a week later.

There was no reason why I should not see him by this time. I had been sitting up for the greatest part of the day, partially dressed and muffled up, reading or staring dreamily into the plane-tree outside, some of the leaves of which were now taking an autumnal tinge of yellow. Dr. Walsham's visits were becoming perfunctory. He addressed me markedly and persistently as "Mrs. Vernon," and I studiously accepted the name without the slightest shade of hesitation. Nurse called me so as a matter of course. What did it matter? Every day brought me nearer to the time when I should be free of them all.

A note came to me at last.

"MY DEAR MRS. VERNON" (my hand shook as I held it, and I felt as if I were doing a dishonourable thing in reading further, but there was no help for it)—"Will you see me and soon? I know that you do not think of me as a friend, perhaps you even mistrust me. I admit that you may have cause to do so, but give me the chance of justifying myself, if not for my own sake, for Muriel's. It is in Muriel's name and Muriel's interests that I beg of you this favour. I hope in time to prove that you have no more faithful friend and servant than

"Yours most truly,
"MILES FORTESQUE"

"For Muriel's sake!" That was a spell to conjure with. I asked for a pencil, but my hand shook and refused to make a legible mark. I threw it aside impatiently.

"Tell him—to-morrow—'for Muriel's sake.'" The words slipped past my lips unconsciously and I buried my face in my pillows in a fit of uncontrollable weeping.

Next morning the matron, when she

came for her visit, brought with her my rings and other valuables, and my keys, and gave them over into my keeping.

A sick shudder came over me as I looked at them. There was a locked drawer in my dressing-table, and I asked nurse to put all away in it, except an old-fashioned ring of my own, with a deep, heavy setting, which I put on. It covered up the wedding-ring, which as yet I dared not discard. The others had been cut, a sufficient reason for not wearing them.

Nurse Magrath looked at them in ecstasy.

"One, two, three diamond hoops, and a ruby and a sapphire, and this big emerald! Oh!" with a gasp of appreciation, "doesn't it make you happy to wear them?"

"Not at all!" I declared. "I wish I might give you one in return for all your kindness to me; but though I may wear them, they are not mine to dispose of."

"Well, I wish they were," she replied frankly; "but I suppose they're heirlooms, or entailed, or something. Won't you wear your locket?"

I held out my hand for it in silence. The black velvet was stained and stiff in one place—I knew why. I examined the beautiful enamel and diamond toy. It opened with a spring. Inside was a tiny miniature of a pretty, pink, featureless baby; opposite, a curl of soft yellow fluff, tied with a scrap of blue silk; underneath, in tiny gold letters, "Muriel."

Nurse caught a glimpse of it.

"That is the Muriel you raved about continually when you came here first. Is she your little girl?"

"I can't tell you anything about her now. Don't ask me!" I answered, with a sharpness that startled her.

She begged my pardon hurriedly, and diverted the conversation by asking what I meant to wear.

"You must be more dressed than you are. It will be just as comfortable in something nice instead of that dressing-gown and shawl, and more proper too, won't it?"

I assented hastily, just to keep her employed and from dangerous questionings. I fastened the locket round my neck as a token of the solemn charge I took upon me in receiving it from the hand of the dead woman, while nurse, in high glee, began to unpack the biggest trunk and examine the contents.

"Here are your dresses in this one, I see; we got your under-linen out of the other. Oh, how nice this is! Trays all

the way down to the bottom! May I look at them all?" I assented, and she plunged into the work with gusto. "This top one will be an evening dress, of course? No, I won't unfold it; I should never get it back again. How beautifully your maid has packed it! Oh, how lovely! Embroidery and silk gauze! Here's a velvet, and here's a silk. Would that be too smart, I wonder?"

"Much too smart," I said positively, thinking of my own one silk best dress, which had been my best for seven years, and had now become shiny enough to pass for satin, as Mrs. Tarrant was kind enough to inform me.

"Here's a cashmere. Oh, may I just open it and look at the body?"

I glanced at the vest, stiff with rich beaded embroidery, and shook my head.

"There must be some more underneath that."

"Of course; the very thing. Tea-gowns! I thought there would be something of the sort. Heliotrope velvet and surah. No? Well, grey satin, with cut steel embroidery? Then here's only a black plush one left."

I agreed, as she seemed to have come to the bottom of the box, and she took it out in great delight.

"Oh, lovely! It's a sin to keep it folded. I'll shake it out well and hang it up."

She went through the rest of the preparations for my toilette with leisurely enjoyment. Dr. Walsham had taken to pay his visits in the afternoon, so we had the long morning to ourselves.

She laid out everything I was likely to want, and repacked the trunk, then dressed me with as much pleasure as a child her doll.

"I'll make you look as nice as I can; but I don't know what you'll think of your hair. It had to be cut off, you know, and kept close when you were so very ill. It's growing a little, I think. Why, you haven't seen yourself yet."

I had not. I had never asked for a glass, and the dressing-table had been moved to allow my chair to be placed in the window.

"Don't look just yet, then. Wait till I've finished you." She brushed and smoothed delicately, and twisted my hair about over her fingers, and at last professed herself satisfied. "Your cap will hide all deficiencies, you know. Where shall I find it?" She dived into the box again,

emerging again with a distressingly fanciful construction of white lace and black velvet. "I can't find anything else but this. You must wear something, you know, to cover the damages. It really wouldn't be decent to go without."

"Lend me one of yours." But I felt the feebleness of the suggestion, and nurse had her way. I stood up and let her clothe me in the sumptuous folds of a long trailing gown of rich plush lined with satin, fastened with clasps of sparkling jet, and long, floating loops of watered ribbon, and furnished by Josephine's wise pre-vision with all needful adornments at neck and wrists of soft white frilling. Nurse Magrath almost shrieked with admiration when her work was achieved.

"Now it's done, and you may see yourself."

I stopped half-way to my chair, and she twisted the toilet-glass so that I could get a full view of myself. I looked at the figure in the glass, and the figure in the glass looked at me, but not for a moment did we seem to recognise one another. There was an old cracked mirror in the garret at the Tarrants', in which every morning a meagre, insignificant person, with an artificial tint of pale green and a distorted wave across her nose added to her already uninteresting appearance, used to part her hair straight and then brush it back and screw it into a severely tight knot behind, pin her collar, and depart, to look no more therein except when she tied her bonnet-strings to go to church on Sunday. Also in Mrs. Tarrant's drawing-room, amongst the lace and rose-coloured satin trimmings, there were bits of looking-glass stuck about, in which sometimes of an evening I caught sight of a white-faced, dingly clad person looking out of place and sleepy amidst the cigarette smoke and rather noisy conviviality which were wont to prevail at Mrs. Tarrant's entertainments.

I knew both of those reflections, and didn't like either; but who was this? A tall, pale woman with soft, dark hair waving thickly over her forehead; stately in rich, flowing garments, and diamonds blazing at her throat; sunken of cheek and hollow-eyed, but without the dull, care-laden air that I knew so well. My long rest and luxurious living had rubbed off the wrinkles, just as it had smoothed away the needle-pricks on my forefinger. All my ugly angles were buried deep in silky softness. Those absurd little waves

of hair on my forehead! I saw myself blush pink as I put up my hand.

"Oh, don't go and spoil it!" cried nurse, with tears in her voice. "Sit down at once. It is dinner-time," and she turned the disturbing looking-glass away.

Instead of my dinner, Dr. Walsham arrived. I was annoyed at being caught admiring myself, and received him with a touch of hauteur that seemed to astonish him.

"My dear, he wouldn't show it, but he was crushed—just crushed entirely!" cried nurse, when he was gone. "It was the gown did it, and the diamonds, and you looking like an empress. The poor creature!"

Then I dined, then I rested, or tried to do so, but all the time my breath came faster and faster and my heart fluttered at every distant noise. Yet how I strove for composure—how I rehearsed over and over again all I had to say—there was so much of it, it bewildered me. I answered nurse's chatter as if in a dream; I let her settle my dress, and "make a picture of me" as she would. I had kept but one white chrysanthemum from the cluster that came in the morning, and she brought it into prominence in a tiny vase. She covered the bed with an Indian shawl that she found in the box and the table with a square of Turkish embroidery that Josephine had packed for some reason or other, arranged the chairs, adjusted the light, and asked wistfully:

"Would you like me to stay here or not?"

I shook my head regretfully. I had the dead woman to think of as well as myself, and I must find, as well as my poor shaken wits would allow, whether he was her friend or foe.

Nurse consoled herself by tripping off to receive Colonel Fortescue, and the sudden calm that followed her departure spread itself gratefully over my wearied mind, and I sank into a peaceful slumber.

The sound of an opening door half roused me. I drew my hand across my eyes, and tried to recall my wandering senses; then, looking up, found myself face to face with Colonel Fortescue. He was standing by the table, as if he had stopped in hesitation, and his bright, kindly, dark eyes were bent on me with such a look of tender, reverential pity and anxiety as it had never been my lot to behold before on a human face. The callow military youths and gay old veterans who frisked round Mrs. Tarrant had re-

garded me—if they ever did so—much as a lively young Egyptian might have contemplated the mummy guest at a festival. The ladies never looked at me at all.

"You are very good to receive me, Mrs. Vernon; but ought I to stay? Do you feel strong enough?"

Look and voice thrilled through me like a draught of generous wine, strengthening, warming, comforting. It gave me courage to speak, though even in the speaking I fancied how the kindly look would change to surprised non-recognition when he saw my face more clearly.

"I am glad you are come. I wished to see you," I said boldly, rising and pointing to a chair near me, and then sinking down from sheer weakness.

I looked full at him as I spoke, but his face only relaxed into a genial smile.

"Did you? I could hardly have hoped that. I heard from the nurse how you took my first visit. And you wouldn't have my flowers; I had no right to expect anything else, I knew, but—"

"Hush!" I interrupted gently. "You do not understand. Before we say any more I must tell you"—it was coming now—"you are under a terrible mistake about me. Everybody is. You must not call me Mrs. Vernon any more. Don't blame me!" I cried impetuously, for his brow knit suddenly, and I saw a startled, distressed look dawn in his bright eyes. "I have done nothing wrong; I swear it. I wish—oh, how I wish to Heaven that I had died!" I stopped to collect myself. I knew I was getting incoherent. "Will you let me tell you how it all happened?"

"Not to-day, my dear lady," he said in a tone of authority. "I will see you again as soon as you wish, and we will talk over this miserable business from beginning to end, if you think it needful. You are not fit either to talk much or to listen just at present. I came here prepared to go into all manner of tedious legal business with you, but nothing shall induce me to do so now that I have seen you. It is a great thing gained," he went on in a lower tone, "that you have been willing to see me and meet me like a friend. It was a kindly thought to wear that—my poor little wedding present."

I saw his eyes rested on the diamond locket. Without a word I unfastened it and placed it open in his hand. His face lighted up with pleasure.

"I knew Muriel's mother was true to her and would not fail her," he said with

another of the bright, kind looks that thrilled me so strangely as he gave it back. Then he drew his chair nearer and seemed to speak more freely.

"I am only to be allowed a short time with you, may I use it to explain my own position? I know you must have thought of me all these years—if you have thought at all—as one of your enemies—no, don't let us put it that way—as on the other side. But what could I do? I was three hundred miles from England when it all happened, and when I came back the trial—well, things had gone too far for me to do anything. I went to Tom at once. I spoke strongly to him. I used words which if he had had the heart of a man in him he should have resented; but all he did say was, 'What on earth do you know about the matter?' And really I—I was unprovided with a satisfactory answer. Then I went to the family solicitors. They, I was gratified to see, had declined to take up your husband's case. I respected them for it and said so, and wanted to know what I could do. They told me that if I had any evidence to offer I might lay it before them; but if I came merely as a sentimental witness to character I should do you more harm than good. I saw they were right; but it maddened me to stand by indifferently while such a piece of wickedness was being perpetrated. Well, let's say no more about it. When all was over, Tom came to me and coolly said he couldn't see why it should make any difference between us. I would gladly have horsewhipped the fellow, and told him so; but he held on to me—just as he used to do in our Eton days. I can't understand why. Then it occurred to me that quarrelling with him was just the worst service I could render you—and Muriel. She was safe, with that good old aunt of hers; but a day might come, as it has come, when my being her father's friend might be of service. Then if Tom had some one always at hand from whom he could hear the plain truth, there might be some chance—" He stopped in some confusion.

"Chance of what?" I asked. I had been listening closely, picking what sense I could out of it all.

"Of a reconciliation with your husband. You know—"

"My husband!" I almost shrieked in my consternation at this new and most unexpected complication. I had made sure Mrs. Vernon was a widow. Good Heavens! Was there a living husband, and would he

insist on claiming me? I felt myself turning ghastly at the idea.

"No, no! Of course it could not be. There are some wrongs past human forgiveness; but one never knows what a woman will do. But it's not to be thought of. You and Tom Vernon! It's too horrible to imagine. Why, there are times when—knowing what I do of the fellow—I feel myself disgraced by shaking hands with him. And to be his wife!"

He fairly ground his teeth and his eyes grew wrathful. It was not with me, and it rather did me good to see it. But it was agitating, too.

"Tell me about Muriel," I managed to falter.

"I'll do better. You shall see her for yourself. I'll bring you face to face; but mind, we must be cautious. How many people know you are here?"

"Only the hospital people and the railway company. I have no friends."

"So much the better. We must work in the dark. If it were known that you were in England, and lying here helpless, I don't know what scheme of iniquity it might not drive them into concocting. So you will keep quiet, will you not?"

"I will see no one but yourself for the present," I readily promised. "But how did you know I was here?"

"I met Maddison at the club. He's not a nice fellow, but I heard he knew you. He said something of having promised to meet you in Paris and escort you over, and how uncommonly glad he was he didn't. My dear, I'm sorry you should have made such friends!"

I kept silence, and he went on hurriedly and apologetically:

"I beg your pardon. I should have remembered the fault lies with those who drove you from your own. Maddison and his wife are off to the Mediterranean for the winter. I saw him go, and took care that he should hold his tongue about your movements. So far all is safe. How long do you stay here?"

"I don't know. As long as they will keep me. Then I must get to work as soon as I can."

"To work!" His eyes opened wide with astonishment. "Why need you do that? Surely you have your own money? Was there no settlement? Even if not, Tom would never refuse——"

I shook my head.

"I am not likely to receive one penny of Mr. Vernon's money," I said, laughing rather hysterically. "I have earned my own living. Ask my employer, Major Tarrant. Do, do! I ask it as a favour. I'll give you his address."

It quieted me to see him writing it down carefully. I was making one step towards the truth. But the light in his eyes when he looked at me again fairly startled me.

"Then I need not ask you about that other money? I could have sworn that you would never touch it. Forgive me; I should never have named it to you but that I am so proud to have understood you so well."

Here the matron came in. The allotted time was over. I held out my hand, he took it in his strong, warm clasp, and looking up at him, I felt myself a pitiful, weak creature, and saw in his face how he would care for me and protect me if I would let him. The tears sprang to my eyes as I said :

"You have promised to hear me out next time we meet. Meanwhile I am sure you will do all that is right and wise for my—for Muriel's sake."

"And you will promise to be brave and strong. Remember that you are her only hope now. All is lost if you fail her. But you will not." He held my hand, still looking down on me with a fine chivalric glow on his handsome face. "We seem a poor pair of champions for her, do we not? A battered old soldier and a delicate little thing like you; but love is strength, and God will defend the right."

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